

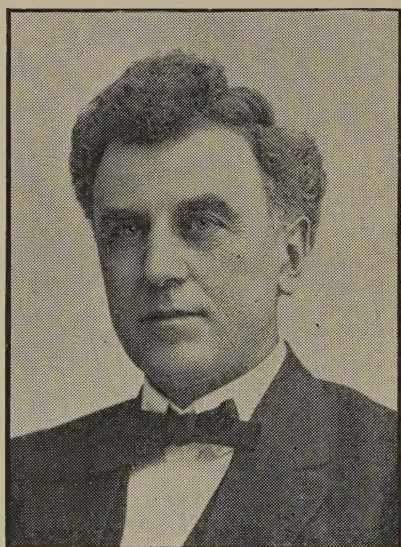
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PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD





PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD

By

REV. S. P. LONG, D. D.

Pastor of The First Lutheran Church, Mansfield, Ohio

FIFTH EDITION
NINTH THOUSAND

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By REV. S. P. LONG, D. D.

DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF:

MY PARENTS, WHO REARED CHILDREN, NOT FOR THIS
WORLD, BUT FOR HEAVEN;

THE REV. KARL F. KUNERT, WHO BAPTIZED ME
ACCORDING TO GOD'S COMMAND;

THE LATE REV. J. DORNBIRER, WHOSE IMPRESSIVE
CONFIRMATION SERMON I COULD REPEAT TO-DAY;

AMOS HOMAN, THE CHRISTIAN SHOEMAKER, WHO TAUGHT
ME HOW TO MAKE SHOES, BUT HELD MY MIND TO
THE BIBLE ON HIS BENCH TILL I LEFT IT
TO PERSUADE A DYING WORLD TO
WEAR GOSPEL SHOES;

PROF. J. C. SAMPLE OF GREENTOWN ACADEMY, WHO
HAD THE FACULTY OF TEACHING EVEN A
BOY THAT DID NOT KNOW MUCH;

THE FACULTIES OF CAPITAL UNIVERSITY AND PHILA-
DELPHIA SEMINARY, BUT FOR WHOSE TEACH-
INGS AND ENCOURAGEMENT THIS LITTLE
MESSAGE, PREPARED IN EIGHTEEN
HOURS, WOULD NEVER HAVE
BEEN PUBLISHED.

By S. P. LONG

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Preface

PREFACE

IT was said of Baxter that he could set the world on fire while Orton was lighting a match. If Dr. Luther were living today, he would set the world on fire more than many of his followers. It would pain him to know how few souls some long-established Lutheran congregations had won for Christ from the highways and hedges. I love "My church, my dear old church" and God loves her; and, with her truth, she can win more souls than any other; but she cannot do it by expecting the spiritually dead to run after her; by having ministers who will please the devil by not entering, or not leaving their study; by baptizing and confirming only her own children; by thinking that the whole mission problem would be solved, if only we had more money; by having few family altars; by having congregations which expect their pastors to do all the *work* in God's vineyard! The Lutheran Church, with her pure doctrine, could set the world on fire if every Lutheran would obey Christ's command: "Go — Work — Today — In My Vineyard!"

Hannah wept because she was childless. Oh that every Lutheran who has not tried to win a spiritual child for heaven, would cry: "Oh my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God!" Ezra 9, 6.

"He that believeth not shall be damned," says your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You believe this. Pray tell me how can you let your relative, friend, neighbor, or enemy, ignorantly live in his sins and be damned? If he wanted

the truth, he could find it in God's Word and many good books taken from that Word; but he does not go to the house of God and does not read God's Word and does not care about the future. Shall you let him perish? Not so long as there is life and hope. We must not get angry at the dead because they do not move, nor must we let those who are ignorant of God's Word perish in their sins. To aid you in helping your pastor to gather in souls from a perishing world to take instructions in the saving doctrines of God's Word, this little message has made its appearance. It has no apology to offer for its existence. David's brothers said he could not battle with Goliath: he did not dispute with them, but showed them that he could by holding Goliath's head in his hand. Critics may find many faults with this little message; my only reply is that I have just confirmed thirteen adults whom God by it brought to His altar on its first mission, and the financial aid of a Christian woman has taken it from the press. Go forth, then, little child of prayer; and, by the help of God, open the eyes of the blind till they can find peace in the eyes of their crucified Lord!

S. P. LONG.

1238 Wesley avenue, Columbus, Ohio. *March 20th, 1894.*

Preface to the Second Edition

THE truth does not change. After a four months' visit to a thousand homes, at times in the company of such noble critics as Dr. Loy and the Christian Press, this little child has put on a new garment and added new words to its vocabulary; but it is the same child. It has been nurtured at the breast of God's Word. It is proud of its mother and now starts out a second time in God's name to introduce her into many more homes of a blind, perishing world. This child was not born to sleep, nor to let sleep; when it has spoken to you, introduce it to the neighbors. It will not harm the saved; it will help the lost!

July 20th, 1894.

S. P. LONG.

Preface to the Fourth Edition

The third edition of this book was published by the Lutheran Book Concern before the author knew it. Any one reading this book should immediately read "The Way Made Plain" by the same author. Our only aim is to lead many to Christ.

S. P. LONG.

Mansfield, Ohio, 1908.

Prepare to Meet Thy God

Prepare to Meet Thy God

AMOS 4, 12

I. THERE IS A GOD

“**H**E THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR LET HIM HEAR.” Matt. 11, 15. God gave you ears to hear and He gave you hearing to listen to Him. He now says to you: “Prepare to meet thy God.” Many will be saved. “Many are called but few are chosen.” Matt. 22, 14. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16, 16. “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever.” Rev. 14, 11. Why is it that men will be lost? Could any man be such a fool as to run into the eternal flames of his own accord? Let us see. Is Satan the cause? Satan can tempt us, but we need not yield. Is God the cause? It cannot be. He says: “Prepare to meet thy God.” Oh man, you may argue yourself into hell, but you cannot find an argument in hell, nor on earth, nor in heaven, to prove that God wanted you to be eternally lost. No man will be lost because he wants to be lost but all the lost will be lost be-

cause they will not listen to their God and prepare to meet Him.

There are many reasons why you should prepare to meet your God. Satan does not want you to prepare; the world does not want you to prepare; you own sinful flesh has no desire to prepare; all the powers of hell say: "Don't make a fool of yourself; don't believe the preachers; don't believe the Bible; you are too busy now to think of religious things; enjoy the world; be a man, and let the future take care of itself!" Oh man, the very fact that the powers of hell are opposed to your preparing to meet your God, *should make you tremble for not already having prepared!*

This moment you are standing between heaven and hell. A trumpet from hell blasts into one ear: "Don't prepare to meet thy God!" and a trumpet from heaven blasts into the other ear: "Prepare to meet thy God!" Your duty is clear — either trumpet should drive you to God. God's short message of five words gives six strong reasons why you should prepare to meet your God; and the first is this:

THERE IS A GOD.

O God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Creator of the universe, Savior of the world, Spirit

of the new birth, this is Thy message, and I am only Thy messenger. The work is Thine. Open the eyes of the blind! Awaken the spiritually dead! Wield the sword of the Spirit! Take the hammer of the law and strike! Immortal God, speak to the immortal souls of dying men, and show them eternal death and the great deliverer. The harvest is ripe; the laborers are few; Lord of the harvest, send forth laborers, and help us to gather in the sheaves. It is not Thy will that we should perish; drive this truth home to the hearts of a perishing world. Bless this message; and now, in Thy name, O Jesus, I cast out the net for souls. Gather Thou them in. Amen.

If there were no God, you would not need to prepare to meet Him; but there is a God; *you know it; you know that He knows you; you know that only He knows Himself; and you know that He knows best how to make Himself known to you.*

1. I say *you know there is a God.* I should think it just as necessary to prove to you that there is a sun and a moon as to prove that there is a God. Every *nation, creation and Revelation* tells you that there is a God.

Every *nation* on earth worships the true God, or false gods. The false gods of Egypt, of Asia, of Europe, of America, of Australia, of all

the islands of the seas though they have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, tongues and speak not, are loud-speaking monuments in harmony with the living voice of Christianity: There is a God! How could there be a *false* god, if there were no *true* One? Every people acknowledge that there is a God, though by reason of the blindness which sin has wrought, not all know the true God.

All *creation* says, there is a God. The old clock at the wall cannot talk and yet it speaks. It tells you what time it is. It tells you when to go to bed, when to rise, when to eat, when to go to church. It tells you that there was a clock-maker in this world, and that he was no *ignomus*. Sit down, O man, and think where you are. You are sitting on a wheel so large that the Rocky Mountains and the Alps are but cogs and you are riding through space at the rate of over seventeen miles per minute. The sun and the moon and the stars are but wheels of God's great clock. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear!" Shall the little clock on the wall talk to you, and will you not listen to the great clock of the universe? If your mind cannot hear the voice of those golden wheels in space, or of the earth on which you stand, then lift up your foot and examine that little blade of grass on which you

just stepped and listen to its little tender fibers as it tells you: God has woven me. Nay, sit down and feel your own pulse and the beating of your heart and let them tell you there is a God.

You know it best from the *Revelation* given in Holy Scriptures. It is true that God has spoken in creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge." Ps. 19, 1. 2. But God tells us this and more in His Revelation. God takes no pleasure in our ignorance. He wants us to know that He is the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; the same God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth; the same God who said: "Let us make man in Our image;" the same God whom the angels praised by saying: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory;" the same God who wants us to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

You may travel through every nation, scan all creation and search the entire Revelation and you will find nothing and no one who will say there is no God but that one lying being — the fool. Ps. 14, 1. Even the father of lies, that old

serpent in Eden, was too cunning to deny the existence of God. The only creature whom he ever found on earth that would stand up and say there is no God, was the fool.

2. There is a God, and *you know that He knows you*. Revelation calls Him "the only wise God." That God is wise you know. But how shall ignorant man describe the wisdom of "the only wise God?" This much is certain: He knows the *universe*. God might have formed the entire mass of matter into one vast world. Who should have hindered Him? Then there would have been no sun, moon, nor stars, nothing to delight the eye and excite our admiration. God in His wisdom divided matter into innumerable worlds and we know that He knows them all. But just as we know that God knows all about yonder heavens and the universe, so we know that *He knows this earth*. The same God who created the worlds knows every world. I take two instruments into my hand: with the telescope I look into the heavens and the vast worlds tell me that I am standing on a grain of sand in this great universe; with the microscope I look at a grain of sand and behold a universe in it. The one tells me how insignificant this world is; the other tells me how immense it is: both tell me that the wisdom of God is in all things. It

has never entered your mind that God does not know this earth.

You know, too, that if God knows this earth, *He knows man*. Should He create light and be blind? Should He separate the land and the waters and not notice the harvests? Should He hang up the lamps of day and night and not notice the animals in the waters, in the sky and on the land? Should God scoop out the valleys, raise the mountains, chain the waters, plant gardens, store away fuel, light, and jewels, and finally create man as the lord of this world and not know him? This earth with all its fulness was prepared for man and not man for the earth. If man had been an ox God would not have created flowers. God knows man, and you know it.

And if God knows man, *He knows you*. You are just as much an object of His attention as the universe, the earth, or the human race. Matt. 6, 24-34. In God's universe there is nothing just like you. You are yourself and nobody, or nothing else. You never make the mistake to take some one else to be yourself. Should you know more than God? If it were possible that everything should pass out of existence except you and your God, He would know you no better than He does now. You may think that

we do not know your sins, but you know that God does; you may not know them yourself, but God does. God now stands before you face to face and says: "Prepare to meet thy God."

3. This leads me to a third thought: *You know that God only knows Himself.* A learned Jewish rabbi in London relates a death-bed scene of a very aged Israelite. He gathered his sons around him and told them of a fearful dream he had the night before. He dreamed that he was dying. An angel appeared holding a garment, saying: "Without this garment you cannot enter heaven." Then he took the garment and tried to open the first fastening and could not, but found the words written, "Know God," he tried the second and found, "Who can know God?" the third and found, "None can know God but God," and without ever finding out how to open the garment he passed into eternity. "Behold, God is great and we know Him not." Job 36, 26. "Thy judgments are a great deep." David. Ps. 36, 6. If that dying Israelite had believed God instead of trying to know Him, the garment of Christ's righteousness would have opened and with it he could have gone home to the Father. How should you, who do not know yourself, know your God? You say you cannot understand the Trinity. Nor can any other man. It

was not necessary for God to reveal unto us what we knew. Be satisfied if God understands the Trinity. Only He knows Himself. You think you understand His *attributes*, but you do not. You know that God is good, holy, loving, merciful, just and righteous; but how can you comprehend how good, how holy, how loving, how merciful, how just, and how righteous God is?

You say you understand His *creation*. You do not understand any more about this little earth alone than a gnat on an elephant's back understands his structure and the beating of his heart. The human race has never seen half of the living creatures on this earth. There are over eight thousand species of the beetle alone. It is probable that the greatest telescope has not yet reached the great stars of the universe. Only God knows His creation.

You say you think you understand His *Providence*. You may possibly understand why a wagon wheel rattles and how some people can sleep on an Atlantic express, but if you can understand how God keeps all bodies in perpetual motion and hurls you through space at the rate of over a quarter of a mile every second and all this with less noise than you would make in rolling a marble, I wish you would begin to explain.

The truth of it is by your trying to understand and know God, you tried to make a god of yourself. "For vain man would be wise; though he be born like a wild ass's colt." Job 11, 12. Away with gods made by man! Away with your foolish questions and listen! There is a God who only knows Himself and He asks you to prepare to meet Him.

4. But there is one thing more that you know: *You know that God knew best how to make Himself known to you.* While only God can know Himself, He does not keep all knowledge to Himself. He wants us to know of Him, even if we can not know Him.

Foolish questions are sometimes asked. "Why did not God do this and that?" "Why did He not make Himself known in this way and that way?" Dear soul, where were you when He planned the universe? Why did you not tell Him the better way? Worm of this earth, since when did God need your counsel? Is there no room for shame in your hardened heart? God who knows better than you do how to make Himself known to you saw fit to give you *His Word by inspiration*. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." I shall show you hereafter that God speaks to you and tells you to prepare to meet Him. Now I want to

impress upon you that fact that God knows best how to bring that message to you. You may not understand it; there are some more things you do not understand, but you need not understand why God did not make Himself known in some other way. Do you tell the worms why you plow? Do you ask your infant how you shall provide for it? You know that God knows best how He wants you to hear of Him.

God made Himself known to us in a special manner by His *incarnation*. "God was in Christ." 2 Cor. 5, 19. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." John 1, 1-14. God became man. He put on a garment of human flesh and bone and laid one hand into the hand of the human race and with the other pointed to the Father and said: "I and My Father are One." John 10, 30. The Father looked at Jesus' human nature in the Jordan and at His divine nature on the Mount of Transfiguration and said: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him." Search the Scriptures and the life of Christ and you will find how the all-wise God was pleased to make himself known to you.

Take this thought home with you this even-

ing: "There is a God. I know there is a God. I know that He knows me; O my sinful Soul, God knows me! O ye liars and enemies, ye have tried to ruin my character, but God knows me. Only God knows Himself. I do not know myself very well, nor God. God knows Himself and me, too. He knows that I have no excuse before Him not to prepare to meet Him."

Dear soul, you never will learn to think rightly, till you constantly stand on this solid foundation stone: There is a God. I am never alone: there is a God. I cannot hide my sins: there is a God. I cannot bear my sins: there is a God. I cannot save myself: there is a God. The hypocrites in the church can neither save nor damn me: there is a God. I cannot always live; this night my soul may be required of me: there is a God and I must prepare to meet Him!

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Amen.

II. GOD IS YOUR GOD.

YOU may not be God's child, but God is your God. God offers His grace to you.

He has given His only Son to die for your sins. He asks you to believe in Him and be baptized and accept Him as your covenant God; but whether you accept Him or not, He will be your Judge and God.

When you sin you sin against your God. Be you ever so rich, if you have not your God on His terms, you are very poor now; and, unless you accept Him yet, will be miserably, unspeakably, awfully poor in hell! Be you ever so poor, if you have accepted Christ in the Father by the Holy Spirit, you are so rich that you possess God and He possesses you. May God, the Holy Spirit, drive this truth deep into your souls now:

GOD IS YOUR GOD.

If you know there is a God and that He is you God, you certainly will begin to take an interest in His loving command: "Prepare to meet thy God!"

I shall now call your attention to this im-

portant fact: *God has always been God of all; consequently your God.*

1. *He was your God before He created the world.* Some of you will never forget your recent visit to the Art Gallery in the World's Fair. What grand scenes! How valuable! But did you stop to think that the last touch of the artist's brush on the canvas was the first touch on his mind? The picture was painted on his mind before it was painted on canvas. The purchasing of the canvas, paint, and brushes and much of the labor was but a preparation for the last central figure which was the first on the artist's mind. Now look at this world with its rivers, seas, lakes, oceans, valleys, hills, plains, mountains, clouds, skies, and heavenly lights. What a grand scene! But is this the picture that God first had in mind? Watch the Hand Divine as it finishes the picture: "Let us make man in Our image." "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden and there He put the man whom He had formed." Gen. 2, 10. "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." Eph. 1, 4. God planted the garden in the midst of creation and placed man into that garden. And now the picture was finished, and man, first in God's mind, was the last to appear. All the rest of creation was but a preparation

for man. God was your God before He said: "Let there be light!"

2. *God was still God of all after sin entered this world.* When Adam and Eve sinned and hid themselves, their God came and said: "Adam, where art thou?" And when He told the Satanic serpent that the seed of woman, Christ, should bruise his head, He clearly showed that He meant to remain the sinner's God. They had rejected Him, but He did not forever cast off the work of His hands. He meant to save the lost. He was still God, though they owned Him not. Adam and Eve were not only driven out of the garden of Eden, but it was their God who drove them out. When Cain killed Abel the blood of the latter cried to their God. Gen. 4, 10. Cain with his troubled conscience said to his God: "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Now, mark you, when Abel was in his grave and Cain was a banished murderer, God was still the Lord even of those who had disowned him.

3. Let us pass on to *Noah's time*; and God is still God of all. Then God's children did just as many do now: they married heathen and became heathen themselves: Gen. 6, 2. Even after God grew impatient with their wickedness, He was willing to bear with them 120 years.

What must His patience be! He was God of all, but only one family was His children. What a family! The world thinks they are crazy, for they are building a large boat on dry ground. I see the multitude of skeptics and scoffers. "Good morning," says one, "when do you expect to finish that boat? Captain Noah, if you think you can steer us safely across these fields, we would like to take an excursion next week to the top of Mount Ararat." "Who is the biggest fool living to-day?" says a jester. All answer: "God's fool, Noah." "Why is Noah a wise lunatic?" says another. None can guess. "Because he is building his own asylum." Thus I can see and hear them ridicule righteous Noah. Time passes on. No laughing and sneering now. It rains, it pours! The floods, the floods! To the ark, to the ark! It is closed. To the mountains and to the hills! They cry, they climb, they rave, they fall, they sink, they die! God's family is safe and God is the God of the dead: for He is still Their Judge and they live before Him though they perish in the waters. He is Judge and they cannot escape His judgments.

4. Let us pass on to *Abraham's time*; and God is still God of all. Abraham's father worshipped idols. Twice God's people had forgotten Him. They all knew Him when He created

them; they all knew Him when they stepped out of Noah's ark and offered sacrifice. Gen. 8, 20. Twice He dealt with the whole world, and they would not remain faithful. Now He selected a representative, Abraham, the father of nations, and gave him the promise that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blest. The question was not at all: "Is God the God of all?" but rather: "How shall all know that God is their God?" and the all-wise God saw fit to choose a peculiar people to remind the world that He was their God.

He says, verse eleven, "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." You remember how Abraham asked God to spare those cities, but he did not know as well as God did how wicked they were. Those cities would be standing to-day yet, if God had not been their God any more than they were His children. They would not believe their God, nor His servant, Lot; so He made them feel. When Lot escaped to the mountain, and his disobedient wife turned to salt, fire and brimstone made the wicked feel that God is their God to whom they must give account, though they refused to recognize Him as God, and He would not accept them as His children.

5. Let us pass on to *Christ's time*; and God is still God of all. When He was born the heavenly host sang: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." Let us analyze that angelic song. "This is all God's doings. Neither men nor angels would ever have thought of this. This thought did not originate on earth. We did not learn our song here. We learned it in heaven. Glory to God in the highest. Earth has not been peaceful since God hurled that rebellious angel out of heaven. There has been no peace between nation and nation, between man and man, nor between God and man. The Prince of Peace is now born. He wants to save every man. It is His will that none should be lost. God is God of all. Good will toward men." Though God is angry with the wicked every day, He still desires in Christ to save them all and be their covenant God through faith.

Here let me call your attention to the divine law which God wrote on the heart of Adam, gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, and which Christ fulfilled. Does not God begin His law by saying: "I am the Lord *thy God*."? Does He not say: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord *thy God*, in vain"? Does He not say of all the commandments: "I, the Lord, *thy God*, am a jealous God"? Does not God sum up all the command-

ments of the first table of the law by saying: "Thou shalt love the Lord, *thy God*, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and all thy strength"? Don't you hear God saying in His law to all nations and every man: "I am thy God, *thy God*, *THY God*"? And when Christ was hanging on the cross fulfilling that law for every sinner; when afterwards He conquered death; when then He commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel in all the world to every creature, did He not clearly show that He was God of all? He wants all to be saved and has made provision for all. If you reject Him you do not dethrone Him. He still reigns as God and calls you to account. But Christ's time is forever; therefore I come down,

6. To the *present time*: and God is still your God.

He never had so many *messages*. There was a time when only the very rich could possess a Bible. To-day God sends His Word in nearly 500 languages to all the world. The Bible was the first book that ever existed, the first to be printed, and is the only book that has been upset every day, in part or whole, for nearly 3,000 years and yet stands always right side up. There are ten reasons why you should go bare-footed where there is one why you should not possess a Bible.

You can buy God's Word now for 20 cents; and, if you can not raise that amount, you can get one for nothing of your Bible Society. God sends you His message to-day in you own language and says: "Prepare to meet thy God."

About 2681 years ago Amos was one of the few of God's *messengers*. To-day God has 38,500 Lutheran pastors in this world and 75,000,000 Lutherans have prepared to meet their God. In the United States alone God has 9,154 pastors in our church, preaching in 16 languages: "Prepare to meet thy God"; and the Lutheran pastors of the world preach this in 90 languages. If ever there was a time that God showed that He was your God, it is now. The Bible is a picture gallery and time is helping us to see the pictures. The Old Testament contained over one hundred prophetic pictures of Christ before He was born. Isaiah drew a picture of this earth as round as a ball and held it up nearly 2,000 years before this world saw it. Isaiah 40, 22. Nahum drew a picture of automobiles and held them up over 2,500 years before any one saw them. Chap. 2, 3. 4. From the isle of Patmos John saw Benjamin Franklin discover electricity. Rev. 13, 13. And there are two pictures on nearly every page of the Bible and the more you look into that Book the better you will see them: the one

is God and the other is yourself. Could you write the biography of a man to be born 2,000 years hence? God wrote yours over 2,000 years ago. He tells you who and what you are better than you could yourself. If I showed you an album with my picture and another by my side you would naturally infer that there is a close relation between us. God has your picture in the Bible beside His, and below is written by the Holy Spirit: "Prepare to meet thy God." Again I conclude: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Amen.

III. GOD FINDS YOU LOST

YOU would not think me unkind, dear hearer, if I, seeing your house burning and you asleep in it, should run and ring your door-bell; or, if necessary, break down the door and run to your bed and pull you out and save your life. Then why would you blame me for running and rapping at the door of your sleepy conscience and crying: "Prepare to meet thy God!" when

GOD FINDS YOU LOST?

The most important messages of this world are sent by the wire and made as short as possible. The message I have to deliver to you now is so important that I do not know how to prepare it quickly enough, and how to make it short enough that you can receive it in time to prepare to meet your God.

We are bound to the laws of the government as long as we live. A murderer is either acquitted, hanged, electrocuted, or imprisoned for life, though the murder was committed in a second, and though the murderer should live to be a hundred years old. A single sin, unforgiven will

damn your soul as long as it lives—forever. Just as the murderer might say: “Is it right that I must be punished for life for a crime committed in a second?” just so you might say: “Is it right that I must be damned forever for the sins of a short life?” The answer to the first question is “Yes,” by the civilized governments of the world, and the same answer is already given by your God. If God had not found Adam and the human race lost by sin, He would not have promised a Savior and given His life for us and asked us to prepare to meet Him. I am not here to argue with you. What I say now you will believe, or soon feel. God found us all lost and, if we are in the same condition now as when we were born, He finds us lost now. Attention now, and notice the *marks* and the *miseries* of the lost when God finds them.

1. First, the *marks*. This is the age of reason. We hear so much of “progress,” and “enlightenment” in this age, that it would seem as though our fathers must have had heads as small as a tea-cup and the hat of the twentieth century will be as large as a half-bushel. If we could buy the enlightenment of this century at its real value and sell it at our imaginary value, there would be no “hard times” financially. Reason will do to make machines, but it can never

unravel the mysteries of the unsearchable God. Nevertheless, *reason* can give us a few marks of the lost.

A lost sheep will *wander around farther and farther and never find its way back itself*. This is a mark of the lost. They have no straight line to follow. They circle from this opinion to that opinion. As the years roll by they wander off farther and farther from their God.

A lost dog will *sometimes lie down and refuse to start in any direction*; he does not know which way to start. This is another mark of the lost. You have no object in life. You stay at home and eat and work and grumble. You do not care for anybody. You do not stand up for your rights. You let everything go as it will. You do not want to go to the house of God. You do not want to go to the Bible. You do not want to go to the altar of baptism. You do not want to go to the Lord's Supper. You do not want to go to prayer. Like a dog—a lost dog—you would rather lie down in your sins and take a whipping than move. Some lost animals will run *without knowing where they are going*. Do you not know why you are in this world? Do you know what you are living for? Do you not know where you are going after death? Have you no aim at all in life? Is eternity all dark

to you? You need not go any further; you have got the mark in your own head—you *are lost*.

If a man, on a new road, *were certain he was going in the right direction and were not, the old settlers could tell him that he is lost*. You may be certain in your mind that your unbiblical road will lead you to the eternal city above, but God and His angels and His saints and the damned know that you are lost and your reason must admit it if you observe the marks.

Reason tells you that *guides of all kinds are the result of being lost*. Men have been lost in the wilderness—guides are there. Men have been lost on new roads—guide-posts are there. Men have been lost in cities and have not been able to find certain houses—streets are named and houses are numbered to guide the lost. In every land there are temples, confessions, towers, creeds, servants of God, telling the world how to be saved. Pray, tell me, could any sane man imagine true or false guides for the soul, if souls were not lost?

But let me give you some better marks of the lost — *the marks of Revelation — the marks which God reveals unto us*. On every lost soul God finds the mark, *Unregeneration*. It has been well said by Scriver that every person should be born three times; once into this world, then born

again — regenerated — and finally out of this world into heaven. Our government demands that the President of the United States must be a born American. Do foreigners ever think of occupying our presidential chair? Never! Well, God demands of every one, born in this sinful world, that he be born again before he shall even see the kingdom of heaven. John 3, 3-5. Have you never been born from above? Have you never been baptized? Are you still in your sins? Has grace effected no change in your soul? Have you no love to God in your heart? Have you made no change at all since you were born? Have you no desire to work in God's vineyard? Are you still trusting in your own righteousness? Then, as sure as God cannot lie, you have the mark of the lost on you—*unregenerated*. God takes an oath to this effect: Verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man (Greek, *tis*; Latin *quis*; German, *jemand*; a person, large or small, an hour or a century old) be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3, 3. We are all born in sin; and therefore, must all be born again in righteousness, or we cannot enter heaven. Again He tells us how we can be born again. "Except a man be born of *water and the Spirit*, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." John 3, 5. The question is not at all whether

little children without baptism would be damned, but the fact is they cannot enter heaven without regeneration, and we have not done our duty to them, even if God does save them in some extraordinary way, if we do not present them to Him to be born again by "water and Spirit," as He wants us to do.

There is another mark that God finds on every lost soul: *Unbelief*. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16, 16. You think you are a good man because you treat your family and neighbors well, but how blind you are! If you treat me well and I know you abuse your mother, can I call you a good man? And if you treat your mother well and you slap her God and Savior in the face by not believing in Him, are you a good man? A rebel against heaven! a good man? Calling God a liar by denying His Word! a good man? Ridiculing the only Savior of the world! a good man? Teaching your children to be damned forever! a good man? You say, "There is a God," so does the devil! a good man? You must either accept the only Savior of man, Jesus Christ, as your Savior, or you bear the mark of the lost, *Unbelief*, and all your nonsense about being a good man will avail you nothing.

But unbelief is a cancer that will break out in other sores and the result will be that God will

find another big mark on the lost—*Unclean*. Some of you may possibly live in adultery or fornication; if so, you are lost. Some of you may wear fine clothes and make a fine appearance; but if your heart is unclean and full of lasciviousness, you are lost. Some of you are fine Christians on Sunday, but during the week you worship another God with skeptics and scoffers—you are lost. Some of you believe more in powwows than you do in prayer—you are lost. Some of you hate God's children and never go to bed without wrath in your hearts—some morning you will wake up in hell. Some of you have murdered and the world don't know it, but God does and you are lost. Some of you have never been in the drunkard's ditch, but you have been in his shoes and you are lost. All of you God wraps up into one bundle and labels it: *Unclean*. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things *shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" Gal. 5, 19-21. Unregeneration, Unbelief and Unclean are God's three marks of the lost.

2. Now, let me briefly tell you of the *miseries* of the lost. No, I cannot tell you, and I am glad I cannot. I hope you never will know. But some things I can tell you of the *present* and *future* miseries of the lost. May this alarm in the name of God awaken your conscience.

Your *present* misery!

You are *against yourself*. It is bad enough to have enemies, but worse to be your own enemy. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" Hos. 13, 9. I beg of you: heed the call of God! Do not stubbornly refuse to prepare to meet your God. Do not cast yourself into the burning flames! Do not let your eternal moan be: "I might have been saved but would not." Do not tell me you are happy in your sins; you cannot be!

All *creation* is against you. Paul says: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain." Rom. 8, 22. Why does it groan? Sinful, lost men are not making the right use of creation. Sinful men are looking down on the animals and abusing them as their gods while their groans are reaching heaven. Creation is against you, lost man! Look up to your Master in heaven and your horse will have a better master on earth. Everything is in disorder through sin that brings misery everywhere.

God is *against you*. What shall I say? God is not only God, not only your God, but He finds you lost and condemned already. Do not say that God will condemn you—you are condemned. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3, 18. In your lost condition you are positively against the Almighty God; and He must be against you. Ezek. 5, 8. His holy law is against you. His Gospel, given to save you, must be against you if you resist His grace and decline the call to accept your God. Mark 16, 16. Heaven's door must be closed against you. There might be some reason yet for one man to fight an army, but for you, poor sinner, lost sinner, condemned sinner, worm of the earth; for you to lift up your hand against Almighty God — what shall I say? This: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." God's bow is now stretched and aimed at you in your sins. He never fails to hit the mark! He may let His arrow fly at any moment. What if it would fly now?

The devil *seems not to be against you*. He is in perfect harmony with your sinful nature. He tells you that you are a noble man. He has you to make a chain and then praises you. He holds

up to you the choicest of forbidden fruits and tells you to eat. *But this seeming friend is the greatest enemy you have.* In reality, he is the only enemy. All wickedness comes from him. At last he will take the chain you have made and bind you with it in hell. Like the boy who baits the trap with a choice apple to catch the rabbit and then cuts its throat, Satan holds up the forbidden fruit to allure you away from God — to eternal death. This is the present misery of the lost.

But the *future misery* will be much worse. But now I am in trouble. What tongue can tell the miseries of hell? Dives' parched tongue would like to tell, if it could find only a drop of water. Luke 16. I am glad that I cannot tell you the miseries of hell, and hope I shall never know more about them than now. This is not my trouble. My trouble is this: How shall I wake up your spiritually dead souls? If you lost a little money, a little home, an animal you loved, you would think it was terrible. If a little child were lost away from home, you would run, ring the bells, and weep; but, sitting over the very abyss of hell, you try to drown the bell of misery by a satanic laugh, or worse than that — sleep. You will not sleep in hell. When the rough-shod

stead of pain begins his eternal gallop over your nervous roads, you will not sleep then.

To this misery will be added the misery of others. I should not want to be in hell one hour free of punishment — the misery of the damned would make me miserable. God says: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Many a woman will gnash her teeth at her husband and say: "Why did you laugh at my faith and ridicule my Church and my God till I forsook Him?" Many a husband will gnash his teeth at his wife and children and say: "Why did you cling together and oppose me and drive us all into this torment?" Many children will gnash their teeth at their parents and say: "Why did you not have us instructed in God's Word and confirmed? And why did you lead such ungodly lives as to make us believe that Christianity was a fraud?" Thousands upon thousands will gnash their teeth at the preachers and say: "Why did you not warn us of this place and tell us that Jesus died to save us? Why did you not tell us to turn or burn? You miserable wretches, if we could add anything to your torments, we would grind you with our gnashing teeth!"

To this another misery will be added — *the remembrance of God's love*. God tells us that every knee shall bow before Him. Rom. 14, 11.

We shall all see Jesus on the Judgment Day. If men could go to hell without knowing that Jesus was their Savior, it would be a comfort in all their miseries to know that they could not help it. But it shall not be so. The hell of hells will be this: "I might have been saved, but would not. The last I saw before I came into this torment was my rejected Savior. I bowed my knees to Him and left Him forever." Then your own conscience will start up an everlasting cry of remorse.

Now, immortal soul, you have heard of the marks and miseries of the lost. Would you not rather hear of hell than feel it? Can you blame me for telling you and warning you in time? Don't you understand now that it must be a loving God who cries to you: "Prepare to meet thy God?" Do you not see now that you cannot for the whole world put off any longer your preparation to meet God? Before I leave you, I must tell you that Jesus Christ, the God-man, died to save you, and now says: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19, 10. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16, 16. God wants *lost* souls to prepare to meet him. Amen.

IV. GOD HAS SALVATION FOR YOU

THERE is a God and that God is your God, and your God finds you lost. In my last discourse I showed you the marks and the miseries of the lost. This evening I have good news for the lost. God has salvation for you, or He would not ask you to prepare to meet Him. Let me impress on you this hour that *God has a beautiful home in heaven; that He has a Way leading to that home; and that He has a way leading to that Way.*

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Father, Son and Holy Ghost, help me now to hold up Thy lamp and show lost souls Thy salvation. Amen.

1. *God has a home for you in heaven.* “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Tim. 3, 15-17. Some seem to think that preaching of heaven is useless. Our reply is brief: The Bible speaks of heaven about seven hundred times, and all Scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable.

If we knew more of heaven, as God wants us to, it would be profitable to us. If we expect to go to some distant city or land, how we try to learn all we can about that land before we start! Yea, do we not hear much of foreign lands even before we can desire to visit them? We cannot hear too much of heaven and hell in this short life of ours. A few thoughts now on heaven.

It is a *place for you to lay up treasures*. Christ says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matt. 6, 19-21. Are you laying up any treasures in heaven? I fear not. Let us see. Where your heart is there is your treasure. Is your heart on tobacco or truth? rum or rest? fashions or faith? silver or saints? acres or angels? jewels or Jesus? earth or eternal life? gold or God? Where your heart is there your treasure is. Could any one but a fool choose the earthly treasures in preference to the heavenly? We say of a very wealthy man when he dies: "He was a millionaire." Yes, he was, but what is he now? What is a man with all

his earthly treasures in the hour of death when he has no treasures in heaven? You are here to lay up treasures in heaven, and not on earth.

Ten times God says in His Word that the names of His children are written in the Book of Life. Some of you, before you started to the great World's Fair, had your names written there and your rooms secured. Is your name written in heaven? Have you made no preparations for your journey into eternity? See to it at once that your name is treasured up in heaven.

See to it also that your *family* is treasured up in heaven. It is not your calling to lay up treasures here on earth for your children, but, I fear, that is what you have been doing. You have been so kind to your family that you have deprived yourself of the comforts of life in order to hand each son and daughter a beautiful earthly treasure; and now you feel that you have done your duty. You have mistaken the treasure. God gave you your family not to lay up for them, but to lay them up for heaven. "The promise is unto you and to your children." Acts 2, 39. Earthly treasures should be given to children who are themselves heavenly treasures, that both may be laid up for heaven.

This leads me up to another thought: *Our wealth should be laid up in heaven.* Money is

a gift of God and only love of it is the root of all evil. Gold and silver are creatures of God as well as man. It is no sin to be wealthy, but it is a sin not to consecrate our wealth to God. This is a great lesson for the Christian Church to learn today. We must stop giving our wealth to the devil. It may be all right to wear a ring, but it does not look right for fingers covered with gold and diamonds to give coppers for missions. It does not look right for a man to boast of his wealth when it is not used to spread God's kingdom. A man's name, family and wealth should be treasured up in heaven. There it can remain forever. There will be no moth nor rust, nor thieves.

Heaven is a *place for you*. How do I know. God says so. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14, 2. God is there. He tells us to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven." God the Father is there; God the Son is there; God the Holy Ghost is there. Angels are there. Saints are there; and still there is room. There are many mansions, but only one house. The gate of heaven is wide enough for all the world. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not per-

ish, but have everlasting life." John 3, 16. But do not imagine that because the gate of heaven is wide enough for the world that, therefore, the unregenerated can easily enter. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." There is room in heaven for all the regenerated. There is not room in heaven for one unregenerated person. And even if there were, none would be found there. When the unregenerated must be pulled into divine services on earth because they feel uneasy where a service is holy, how would they feel in heaven? Even if it were possible for an unregenerated soul to enter heaven, his eternity would nevertheless be a hell. Every man can be regenerated and then there is room for him in heaven.

Heaven is also a *place of rest*. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." Heb. 4, 9. This is no place to rest. Here we are to earn our bread by the sweat of our face. Here there is so much to do that we must work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work. John 9, 4. The harvest is ripe and the laborers are few. Here we sigh and moan; here we tremble and fall; here we are tired. In heaven there is rest. There we "shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," and knowing them, we shall know our own; and whether we shall

know them or not, God tells us, "we shall be satisfied." Ps. 65, 4. What a rest that will be when in all eternity we shall be satisfied!

Thus, if God has a home for you where you can lay all your heavenly treasures forever, and where you may have rest in your mansion prepared for you, do you not see another reason why you should prepare to meet your God? To do this, you will please to notice

2. Secondly, *that God has a Way leading to heaven.* Without a way He would not ask you to meet Him. Let me show you the Way. God created the angels, blessed spirits; and irrational animals, flesh and bone; and man, flesh, bone and soul. An angel rebelled, was hurled from heaven, took the form of a serpent and struck his sinful fangs into the heart of the human race. The merciful God at once promised that He would crush that serpent's head by becoming man. Gen. 3, 15. He told the prophets that through Him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He told Isaiah that He would be born of a virgin and that He would be "Wonderful, Counsellor; the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He told Zachariah that He would ride into Jerusalem on an ass. One night an angel said to the shepherds: Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of

great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ, the Lord; and then the heavenly host sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was now man. Satan hounded Him till he saw the Son of God nailed to the cursed tree on Calvary. Little did Satan know that the death of Jesus would crush his own head. But so it was. Jesus paid our debt and rose again and now when we have Him by faith we have the *old Way*, the *only Way*, and the *Safe Way*. Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by Me." By Him all in heaven have been saved. The patriarchs and prophets were saved by the promised Savior and we through the crucified Savior. His promised redemption was as powerful as His past redemption.

And He is the *only Way*. "None can come to the Father but by Me." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts 4, 12. There were many religions represented in the Religious Congress of Chicago, but only one that told a poor sinner how to reach heaven. An old man was

walking over a river today on an only log and a man took an ax and stepped between him and the further shore and tried to cut the log in two to drop him into the river. Did he succeed? No! The log was harder than the ax, but it did show how mean the rascal was. Do you want to know his name? It is the infidel who would try and break down your only way to reach heaven.

Jesus is a *safe Way*. A few years ago I visited the Yellowstone National Park, about sixty miles long. I hired a pony and rode to the Falls and back. When I started I asked the way and this was the reply I received: "There is only one way; stay on it and you cannot miss it." Off I started, over hills, through valleys, along the cliffs, past geysers, to the Falls — alone, but safe, for there was only one way. Pilgrims, are you alone? Do you not know the way? You can make no mistake. Jesus says: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father, but by Me." This Way is safe. Every one in heaven has gone by this Way. I have stood by the bedside of many who had been on this Way and now were near the end, and they would not leave it. No man ever repented for having been a Christian.

3. Notice, finally, that God has a way to lead to that Way. What good would heaven do

us and a way to heaven, if we did not know how to reach that Way? But we do know. God has appointed the means of grace, the Word and Holy Sacraments, as the Way.

We must *hear of the Way*. For "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? Rom. 10, 14. Mark what I say: If you are not willing to go to the house of God and hear His preaching; if you have not time to read or hear His Word at home; if you are not willing to study your catechisms gleaned from God's Word; if you are so reckless and careless as to prefer darkness to light and ignorance to knowledge — then you cannot find the way. But you have heard of the way already; you hear it now: Jesus is the Way.

Next, *you must leave your old way*, if you want to get on the new way. You cannot walk on two streets at one time, nor can you walk with Jesus and keep hold of the devil. Oh, how willing some of you would be to follow Christ if He were going to hell! If you want to get on the way that reaches heaven you must say to your sinful comrades: "Come with me now, or farewell forever!" 2 Cor. 6, 14-18.

You must *get on the way to heaven*. But do not think for a moment that your good works will take you there, for you have none until grace

renews your heart, and then you will think only of grace and not of works. To get on the way you must let the Holy Spirit do His work. You must repent. You must be sorry for your sins and believe in Jesus Christ. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2, 8. 9. Washed in the baptismal wave sing:

"In my hands no price I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

You have now heard that God has salvation for you. Now you will see better what Jesus means when He says: "Prepare to meet thy God!"

A few years ago there was a murderer in the Pennsylvania prison. His friends tried hard to have him pardoned, for he had been found guilty of death. The Governor was a Christian and said the law must take its course. One morning a stranger appeared at the door of his cell with the sheriff. He told the prisoner to prepare to meet his God and left. Afterwards he asked the sheriff who that stranger was. "That was Governor Pollock." The prisoner wrung his hands and wept bitterly and said:

“Why didn’t you tell me?” O prisoners of sin,
I now tell you: The King is here! Prepare
to meet Him! Amen.

V. GOD REASONS WITH YOU

A CHRISTIAN, strong in the faith, is one to whom you can go at any time and tell him face to face what you think of him and he will thank you for your good intent and, the stronger he grows in his faith, the less he will think of backbiting. I stand here week after week and tell you what I think God wants me to say and I shall be thankful if, during the week, you tell me what you think God wants you to say to me. Our best friends are those who will defend us in our absence and tell us of our faults in our presence. Let us learn this lesson now from our God. He gave Israel many reasons why they should have returned to Him, but they would not. Finally He went to them face to face and reasoned with them, and told them what He would do if they would not prepare to meet their God. "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" Behold the controversy! The omniscient God reasons with ignorant man! He comes and sits down with us and says, "Come now and let us reason together." Isaiah 1, 18.

I have listened to the reasons of men for not preparing, and I have noticed a few of God's reasons why they should prepare to meet their God. Now let the controversy go on between man and his God; and, while it proceeds, let Christians learn how to deal with their brothers — face to face — and others learn to prepare to meet their God.

The first controversy. What has man to say? This: "I love my children and I could not for a moment think of giving one over to death, how then could a loving God give His only Son to die for us? If Christ was the Son of God then His Father must have had little love in His heart to give Him to be nailed to the cross." This is an argument I have often heard advanced by sinners in their blindness. Now let God reply: "I and My Father are One." John 10, 30. There are not two Gods but only One. When Jesus died, God manifest in the flesh died. The Father did not drive His Son to the cross against His will, but "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Cor. 5, 19. Many of our sons died in the last war. They fought to save their country. Did their parents not love them? Then why do you think God did not love Christ When He gave Him to save a perishing world? Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that

He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. John 4, 10. The victory is God's!

Second Controversy. Man, what have you to say now? This: "If I had the most wicked son on earth I could never give my consent to have him punished forever; how then can God, who is love, condemn me forever, if I do not believe in Him? Have I a better heart than God?"

Let God answer briefly: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3, 18. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19, 10. You are condemned now, if you have not been saved. Your sins have condemned you. Christ has come to save you. Without Him you are everlastingly lost; and only through Him can you ever be saved. He laid down His life for you; and, if you still think He does not love you, you are condemning yourself. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3, 16. Again the victory belongs to God.

Third Controversy. Let man speak again. What have you to say this time? This:

“Many church members are hypocrites and I do not see that the best Christians are much better than I am. What great wrong have I done that I should prepare to meet my God?”

And now Lord arise and speak: “There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Rom. 3, 10-12. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Rom. 3, 20. Without Christ no man can be saved. I am trying to serve my God and lead a Christian life, but, if I were a thousand times better than I am, I would still be lost without Christ. Christians are not saved by their goodness. Christ saves the lost. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” Rom. 3, 21. 22. The victory belongs to God .

Fourth Controversy. What next, O man? This: “I hear it preached that whosoever will, may come to God and that He will not reject anyone. I hear it preached that Thou canst save

the worst of sinners. Now this, I maintain, is a bad doctrine: it will make the world worse and worse. We do not want a Savior for the worst people."

Stop, O man, and let God speak. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1, 18. If I should not save the worst of sinners, how could I save you? If I could save only the saved, I would be no savior. But you know that the saved sinners are today the salt of the earth. Men do not sin because they have a great Savior, but because they have Him not. Do men have to become sick because they know of a good physician? Much less would one, delivered of his sin-sickness, love to sin again because God can forgive. The victory belongs to God.

Fifth Controversy. What have you to say next, O man? This: "I wish God and His servants would let me alone. I know when I want to go to church and when I want to prepare to meet my God. I am tired of having others bothering their heads about me. The truth of it is, I am angry, and I don't care to talk any longer."

God speaks: "You are angry. Rome. 3, 21. I love you. John 3, 16. Your mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Rom. 3, 14. My servants pray for you. You are going to destruction. Rom. 3, 16. I have come to show you the way to heaven. Matt. 7, 13. 14. You do not know the way of peace. Rom. 3, 17. I am the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9, 6. You have no fear of me. Rom. 9, 18. I fear you do not know that you are angry at your best friends. What greater proof could you ask for your unreasonableness than to become angry at your friends? Have you forgotten that the vanquished become angry? Do you not see that your disposition is proving the great necessity of preparing to meet your God?" The victory belongs to God.

Sixth Controversy. Speak again, O man! "I am ready to speak. I believe in a hell, too, but this life is hell enough. When I do a wrong I suffer for it. If my laboring and sweating and suffering is not hell, I do not know of any."

Now what shall God say? He tells us that He scourges every son whom He receiveth, and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven. If God scourges His sons and leads us into His kingdom through tribulation, then there can be no hell in this life, for then His children would be in hell. Besides,

many who lead lives of sin are prospering in this world, while saints are suffering very much. This is not the exception, but the rule. The punishments of this life are a strong proof that there must be a better life for the righteous, and a greater punishment for the unbeliever after death. Do you mean to say that that suffering Christian mother is now in hell and that healthy scoundrel is in heaven? The victory belongs to the Lord.

Seventh Controversy. The sinner says: "I am doing the best I can. I am giving my children a good education. I am a sober man. I pay my debts. I give to the poor. I never refuse to give money to the Church when asked for it. I am no Christian, but I am trying to do the best I can."

What has God to say? This: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" You are not doing the best you can, but the very worst you can. I gave you children to bring them to Me and you never told them who I am. I created you, redeemed you, and sent my Holy Spirit to call, gather, enlighten, sanctify and to keep you, but you do not want to know Me. You give to the Church and despise the Word of God and the holy Sacraments. You have built a house and a

barn, but you are laying up no treasures in heaven. You have strong faith in yourself, but none in Me. You are doing the very worst you can — rejecting your only Savior.” The victory belongs to God.

Eighth Controversy. Mr. Wiseneighbor speaks: “I am a Spiritualist. You laugh at me and say that I have been deceived, but I tell you I have talked with members of my own family who have passed over into the spirit world, and you may say what you please, I know that voice when I hear it.”

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thess. 2, 11. 12. Of course there is such a thing as spiritualism, and I am not at all surprised that that old spirit that made Eve believe that he was a serpent, can now so imitate your mother’s voice that you think you hear her. Has spiritualism raised Lazarus, or fed five thousand with five loaves? Let me see: who are the mediums in your city? Would you like to have such characters for mothers and sisters? Did you not think of that before?

Ninth Controversy. Let the aged father speak: “I am old and gray. I wish I had

entered God's vineyard when young. I see now that if I had served my God better, my children would have served me better. I sowed in sin and now I am reaping the harvest. I like to see children go to church and serve God, but I am too old — too old."

Let God speak: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Luke 12, 20. If it is necessary for children to prepare to meet their God when at the beginning of life, how much more is it necessary for you at the gates of eternity to do so! Stop now and say: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Trust now in the blood of Jesus! Oh aged father, there is only one thing for you to do in this life; act before it is too late — prepare to meet thy God.

The last controversy. Have you anything more to say to your God, O man? Sum up the whole matter in a few words.

"I notice, Lord, that many Lutherans advocate parochial schools, oppose secret societies and do not invite all professed Christians to the Lord's Supper; is this Thy will?"

Lord, speak: "With regard to schools, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.' Prov. 9, 10. 'And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the

nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Eph. 6, 4. 'Feed My lambs.' John 21, 15. This is what the Lutherans want to do with their parochial schools." ... 9

"As to secret societies, 'In secret have I said nothing.' John 18, 20. 'For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.' John 3, 20, 21. Men joining secret orders are asked to believe in a Supreme Being but not in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. They take an oath which I have forbidden. Matt. 5, 34. They promise poor condemned souls help without a Savior. Their prayers are mockery, for My name is not in them. It is a religion without 'Christ crucified' that pleases the devil. Any religion that will not save souls will help damn them. Christians must come out of all Christless religions. Paul preached the same as the Lutherans." 2 Cor. 6, 14-18.

"As to My Supper: Lutherans must invite whom I want, not whom others want. Those who have nothing but bread and wine have a supper of their own and can invite whom they please, but the Lutherans have My Supper and they let me invite whom I want. I do not want

those to come to My Supper who think they receive nothing but bread and wine, for they would thereby eat and drink their own damnation."

1 Cor. 11, 29.

Dear soul, do not ask what men say; do not do as men do; do not think that Satan hates religion, for he asked Jesus to worship him; but go to God's Word and ask what He says and give Him and His loving truth the victory. Amen.

VI. GOD WARNS YOU

AND now my message to you is nearly done. God asks me once more to awaken your soul to listen to the Inspired Bell as it tolls with warning tones: "Prepare to meet thy God." Every warning God gives you is through His Word: through it He warns you *with His visitations, with the eternal mistakes of others, with your own narrow escapes, with His command, once more.*

1. God warns you first with *His visitations*. In verses six and ten God calls Israel's attention to the fact that He had warned them with *famines, drouths, insects, pestilence and wars*, and yet they had not returned to Him. Today He must say the same to us. I knew a physician who, when he would see a thunderstorm approaching, would go to bed and draw the covers over his head that he might not see the lightning's flash nor hear the crash, but at last he dropped dead on the highway when the earth was covered with the white blanket of snow. Thus, when God's visitations approach us, we try our best not to see the brightness of His face, nor to hear the thunder of His warning, but now

He finds us at this very spot and makes us hear. *"And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord."*

Does this not ring like a warning bell in our city, and in the cities of the world, this evening? When there is no bread to eat no crumbs need to be picked from the teeth. I tell you on good authority, for I can take you to such homes in five minutes, that there are families in this city that have not a bite of bread in the house. While I am speaking, the poor are groaning in every large city in the world. What does this mean? Blind politicians tell us that the other party is the cause. Our homes are forgetting God. Fathers and mothers have left the altar of God and have run to clubs, lodges, saloons, and balls, and have left their children to go to the devil, and the good Lord cannot bear it any longer to see families go to hell with full stomachs and no knowledge of Him. So He now pulls the bell of famine and rings into our ears: "Prepare to meet thy God!" Oh, what an unthankful world! You unthankful souls, I am surprised that God has not starved you long ago!

When it does not rain for awhile and your crops yield no harvest, you think you had bad

luck and that it just happened so. You positively know that God has nothing to do with the rain and you know just as positively that you do not serve your God and He knows it and He will make you feel it. You plant again and no harvest. What shall you do? Move? Yes! Move to prepare to meet your God! *“And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest and I caused it to rain upon one city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered into one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.”* Vs. 7 and 8.

You plant potatoes and the bugs eat them. You sow clover and grasshoppers eat it. You plant grapes and the insects sting them. You plant trees and the worms destroy them. Everything seems to be against you. What is the matter. The world is against God. Prosperity has made the world deaf. If they will not listen to His sharp Word they must feel the sting of the hornet. A young man was running as fast as he could. A hornet stung him in the eye and stopped him. If he had run ten steps further he would have stepped on a boa constrictor. God

now warns you to prepare to meet your God before you step into the presence of that old serpent of hell. *"I have smitten you with blasting and mildew; when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased the palm-worm devoured them; yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord."* V. 9. Death is reaping a great harvest again. Cholera is coming; consumption is riding the swift steed of la grippe from city to city and from home to home. Miasma is softly creeping over the side-hills and into our houses and bodies. Pestilence, with his coat of many colors, is taking a tour around the world. Swords are now flashing and ready to flash. That generation never lived that did not know of present wars. Men of great minds tell us that these little wars of smaller governments today are but sparks of the greatest battles, soon to be fought, in the history of the world. When death and wars sweep thousands upon thousands into eternity, should you not prepare to meet your God? He says so: *"I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up into your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord."* V. 10.

2. *God also warns you with the mistakes of others, unknown and known.* He calls our attention to Sodom and Gomorrah. With the exception of a few we do not know who lived there, but one thing is certain: they were a wicked people and would not listen to God's Word; and, when the brimstone fell and burned those cities and the inhabitants, they suffered no more than they do tonight in hell. They made an eternal mistake. Many a man whom you do not know has made an eternal mistake by waiting to prepare to meet his God. But not only the unknown have made such a mistake. God says: "*I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*" You have no fault to find with me when I tell you that Judas Iscariot was lost, but when I tell you that one of your own family made the eternal mistake of not preparing to meet his God you do not like it. But whether you like it or not, I fear that "some of you" have already made the eternal mistake. Shall you be among their number? Do you not know that Dives in hell did not want his five brothers to come into that "place of torment?" Should not the fearful, eternal, mistakes of the damned be a warning to you to prepare to meet your God? O sinner, will nothing waken you

up but the wail of the lost? Is there nothing to melt your cold heart but the flames of hell?

3. But God gives you a third warning: *your own narrow escapes* — “*and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.*” V. 11.

Is it not a wonder that you are living now? Do you not remember that hour when you became conscious of what you had just passed through and you thought to yourself: How did I escape death. “And ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning,” or you would be dead now. If you never thanked God before, stop now and thank Him that you are not in hell. Once, twice, three times, many times, His guardian angel snatched you from the jaws of death and held you up as a burning brand to give you a little more time to prepare to meet your God. You shall not always escape. You possibly dreamed one night that you had died in your sins and Oh! how happy you were in the morning to find that it was but a dream. Time has passed and you are still in your sins. Your narrow escapes are a loud warning to you to prepare to meet your God, for soon your dream may be a reality.

4. And now I take my text as the command of God and by the help of the Holy Spirit press

it closely to your soul and warn you *once more, loudly, plainly, personally, decisively, intelligently*: "Prepare to meet thy God." God cannot warn you forever. The last warning must come: This may be the last. This much is true: God warns you once more!

Next to Christ's "Eli, Eli, lama, sabach-thani!" on the cross, I know of no passage in the Bible that rings louder in my ears than this text. If every star were a trumpet and the sun and moon were golden and silver bells and the angels of heaven should blow and ring, the impression should not be as *loud* on your ears as when God thunders: "Prepare to meet thy God!"

How *plain* the message! Five little words that any child could understand. "Prepare" — do something; "to meet" — God is coming; "thy God" — you and your God will soon stand face to face.

The message means you *personally*. If I said: "Meet me here tomorrow," you would know that I did not mean some one, but the ones I address. When God spoke to Israel, He said: "O Israel," and when He gave Israel the Gospel He gave it for the world. Mark 16, 15. God means you, little child, young man, young woman, young parents, aged dying grandfathers and

grandmothers: you He wants to prepare to meet Him.

His warning is *decisive*. You have no choice in the matter if you would escape the wrath to come. God will not give you His consent to be lost. He will not force you into heaven, but He cannot ask you to do as you please. He cannot even hint that you may disobey Him. Would a mother let her child choose between her lap and the fire? Could a loving God, whose heart of love has the universe inside of it, unconcernedly let you choose between heaven and hell? Therefore, He tells you decisively what the only thing is for you to do: "Prepare to meet thy God." He warns you *intelligently*. God is God and you are a man. Man must meet his God. His Word tells you what to do. You must go to His Word and find out who you are and how you stand in His sight. You must go to His Word and find out who God is and how you can be reconciled with Him. And do not be selfish. You would not think of learning how to make a shoe without going to a master and learning. Jesus taught His disciples three years and then Judas was not prepared, and Peter, weak Peter, "wept bitterly." You can be a child of God in a moment, but it may take a long time till you are prepared for that moment. Do not be satisfied

with an ignorant profession of religion. God wants you to prepare. Go to His servants and learn. If I wanted to know law, I should go to a lawyer. If I wanted to know how to become a doctor of medicine, I should go to a good physician. And if you want to prepare to meet your God, buy Luther's catechism and a Bible and go to a Lutheran pastor, or have him come to you, and let him show you in a few months what he has found in many years. Strange, indeed, that you should be willing to spend years to prepare to work at a trade a short time, and then think, to prepare for eternity — it can be done in a few minutes. The three thousand who were converted in one day, the day of Pentecost, forgot more of God's Word before that day than many so-called Christians know today. "Search the Scriptures," says Jesus.*

Let me lay down a few plain rules for preparing intelligently to meet God.

1. Remember God *can speak*. You can speak and your God can do what His creature can. You could not think of God as not being able to speak.

2. God is your Father and a father *would*

* Read "The Way Made Plain" published by the author.

speak to his children. God is King, but a king lets his subjects know who he is.

3. God *has spoken*. Every book has an author. Over forty inspired men who wrote the Bible deny that they are the authors. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1, 21. The Bible has but one Author, yet its writings occupy nearly 1500 years of time. *That Author is your God.*

4. Your God tells you that *your soul is worth more than all the world*. "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" Mark 8, 36. Think much of your soul's value. God calls it a jewel. Mal. 3, 17. Do not let your valuable soul be lost in sin, for you, from God.

5. If you are not prepared to meet your God *now*, even though you could gain the whole world in *one hour*, you would not have the time. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6, 33. Only such a deceiver as Satan could make you believe that there is plenty of time to prepare to meet your God.

6. Seek the better acquaintance with your God and yourself. God knows Himself and you

You may think a great deal of yourself and others may think you are great—God knows you are a poor sinner. Do not rest till you have God's answer to this question: "How can I be reconciled and united with Thee, O God?"

7. A good citizen must know the laws of his country. He who wants to prepare to meet his God must learn God's law, the ten commandments. "I had not known sin, but by the law." Rom. 7, 7. When man thinks he is converted and does not know the law, he is miserably perverted. Learn the commandments and then you will have learned two valuable lessons; namely: you are a sinner and you know now the works that are pleasing to God.

8. But you cannot please God without faith. "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Rom. 14, 23. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16, 31. You say that you know there is a God — so does the devil. You say you know that God can save us — so does the devil. Can you say that God is your Savior — the devil cannot say that. Learn the Apostolic Creed. Do not be afraid of creeds. Satan has made some people believe we should have no creed and by doing so got them to believe his creed. Whatever a man believes, that is his creed, and a Christian must

believe the Christian creed. Know what you believe concerning Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and confess it and defend your faith.

9. Through His Word the Holy Spirit comes to you. He comes through His Word alone, through His Word connected with water in baptism, and through His Word connected with bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Use these means of grace without which you cannot be brought to Christ and cannot be prepared to meet your God. But you must also go to Him *in prayer*. Make prayer a study. Practice prayer. Do not think for a moment that all babbling is prayer. I cannot draw your money out of the bank without your name, nor can you pray for gifts from heaven without Christ's name. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you." John 16, 23. God has only one Son — Christ, and that Son's children are the ones who were taught to say: "Our Father, who art in heaven." As a sinner, discovered by the law, forgiven by faith in Christ, pray to your Father in heaven to strengthen your faith.

10. After God can say of you as He said of Saul, "Behold, he prayeth!" then remember that He accepts you as His child by Holy Baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized shall

be saved." Some say that you must be immersed — God does not say so. Some say that you must be sprinkled — God does not say so. John baptized "with water." Christ said: "Except a man be born *of water* and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." John 3, 5.

Study Luther's Catechism carefully and you will find that God's Word teaches that water — much or little — in the name of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, applied to believing adults, or infants, is baptism. "The promise is unto you and to your children." Acts 2, 39. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones *which believe in Me*, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matt. 18, 6. Little infants can believe, or they can not. God says: "He that believeth not shall be damned." Which horn of the dilemma will you take? You must admit that God can kindle faith in an infant's heart, or that it must be damned. You will not take the latter, but agree with God when He says: "Baptize all nations." If you were baptized in infancy, thank God; if not, "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22, 16.

11. The Lord wants you to come to His Supper. This will be a happy meeting. Three invitations are extended to you by different denominations.

Invitation number one: "We, the Reformed churches, hereby invite all Christians in good standing to come to the Lord's table. We are all aiming for one place, and inasmuch as the bread and wine merely represent the body and blood of Christ, we promise you in the Lord's Supper *only bread and wine.*"

Invitation number two: "The One Holy Catholic Church, having authority, infallibility, and indefectibility, hereby announces that the Lord in His supper gives *only body and blood* — the body for the communicants and the blood for the priest."

Invitation number three: "The Lutheran Church invites only those to the Lord's Supper whom the Lord invites. The Lord says He gives us *bread and wine and body and blood*, and further declares that those who think they receive only bread and wine, eat and drink damnation to themselves. 1 Cor. 11, 29. As our religion is not liberal enough to invite ignorant Christians to eat and drink damnation to themselves; therefore we ask only those to come to the Lord's Supper who believe Him when He

says: "Take, eat; this is my body;" and "Take, drink; this is my blood." See Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul on Lord's Supper.

The three invitations are before you. Two must be wrong. Search God's Word and see what He says. To eat and drink at the Lord's table is a heavenly feast on earth. No wonder He wants us to prepare to meet Him! The Lutherans believe as Christ and Paul did: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Cor. 10, 16.

You say you cannot understand this:

12. This leads me to the last rule, which should be first and last in your mind. *Believe God.* God does not ask you to understand Him, He wants you to believe Him. What you see with your own eyes requires no faith. We have no more right to say that bread represents Christ's body than we have to say that the Bible represents God's Word. Believe God when He speaks. Believe God, if all the world forsake Him. You have no right to add to or take away from God's Word. Rev. 22, 18. 19.

And, now what more shall I say? If you are ready to prepare to meet your God, and anything I have said in my weakness has urged you

to take that step, I shall say: "Praise the Lord, our Savior and our God!" But should you still continue in that greatest of all sins, unbelief, the damning sin, then I could weep for myself for having delivered God's message so poorly, and for you because you will reject the only Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus asks you to study His Word,
Jesus your Savior, your God and your Lord.
Your dear soul He has come to save this day—

What do you say?

He is rapping, your soul to save from hell.
Shall He come? or shall Satan always dwell
In your heart where there never shall be day?

What do you say?

Is there more than one thing for you to say,
When all hell is night and heaven is day?
There is not; but if you will delay,

O Judgment Day!

Amen.

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